



## ♦ *Survey Results In Brief* ♦

# THE NORTH ANDOVER POLICE DEPARTMENT 2000 CITIZEN SURVEY

### HIGHLIGHTS

- ♦ A total of 720 surveys were completed and returned, resulting in a response rate of 36%.
- ♦ Survey results were tracked by voting precinct and police patrol sector.
- ♦ A total of 45 respondents by their request had issues or concerns addressed directly by Chief Stanley or a member of his command staff.
- ♦ Overall the survey results indicate that residents feel safe and secure in their community.
- ♦ Major areas of concerns to citizens include police visibility and interaction with the community, drug enforcement activities, youth and school services, traffic enforcement, and crime prevention programs.
- ♦ An overwhelming number (95%) of the respondents rate the police department's performance as *Above average* or *Excellent*.

As the philosophy and principles of community policing have been adopted across the nation, police departments have turned to a variety of methods to measure their success at incorporating citizen priorities and concerns into their operations and organizational planning. As a part of the North Andover Police Department's efforts to increase community participation in ensuring citizen safety and security, in 1999 the department engaged in a formalized strategic planning process, a major component of which was to begin conducting an annual citizen survey.

As in other police agencies both in Massachusetts and elsewhere, the leadership of the North Andover Police Department recognizes that community surveys provide descriptive information that goes beyond the traditional measures of police workload such as arrest activity, reported offenses, and calls for service. They understand and accept that since community police officers are trying to be responsive to community concerns, a complete measure of their successes and failures must include a structured process of gaining citizen input.

In October 2000 the department released the results of its second annual Citizen Survey. The survey design, method of delivery, and tabulation of responses all emphasized the desire of the leadership and management of the Town of North Andover and the North Andover Police Department to provide respondents the greatest degree of flexibility possible in submitting their opinions, concerns, and recommendations to town administrators and department members.

Additionally, respondents were offered maximum opportunity to provide their responses in an anonymous fashion. North Andover Police Chief Richard M. Stanley sought to emphasize this by requiring that Crest Associates, a consulting organization retained by the department with funds from a state community policing grant, receive all responses directly. As stated in the cover letter accompanying the survey questionnaire,

*Remember that your responses are anonymous. All responses will be forwarded to Crest Associates, a firm retained by the police department to assist in the development and implementation of the police department strategic plan. The police department will receive survey summary results, analysis, and the anonymous commentary provided by respondents.*

While ensuring the anonymity of the respondent was a priority, of equal importance was offering citizens receiving the survey the opportunity to address a particular incident or area of concern involving the police department or a public safety (law enforcement) issue in the community. With that in mind, the survey instrument was

### 2000 Citizen Survey Response Rate

Voting Precinct	Surveys Mailed	Surveys Returned Undeliverable	Final Sample Population	Surveys Returned Completed	Response Rate
1	350	19	331	98	30%
2	350	14	336	126	38%
3	350	7	343	108	32%
4	350	17	333	113	34%
5	350	13	337	136	40%
6	350	12	338	137	41%
Non-designated				2	
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,100</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>2,018</b>	<b>720</b>	<b>36%</b>

designed to offer the respondent the opportunity to provide detailed information regarding an area of concern or incident, as well as the choice to provide confidential contact information which would either be provided directly to the Chief of Police or to a member of the department's staff for follow-up. A total of 45 respondents took advantage of this feature of the survey process and had their issues or concerns addressed directly by Chief Stanley or a member of his command staff.

Surveys were mailed to 2,100 households in the Town of North Andover, Massachusetts. Utilizing the Town Manager's database of approximately 11,000 households, a random sample was drawn from each of the six (6) voting precincts. Eighty-two (82) surveys were returned undeliverable, leaving a total of 2,018 as the final sample population. Seven hundred and twenty (720) surveys were completed and returned representing a final survey response rate of 36%.

*voting precincts which roughly mirror the North Andover Police Department's designated patrol sectors, provides important information to officers in the field regarding specific concerns and suggestions from citizens relative to the area they work in. As such, the results of the survey serve as an excellent tool for officers engaging in community policing and problem solving activities within their specific patrol sectors as well as throughout the entire town.*

Survey method and response

*A unique feature of the survey process, tracking the survey results by*

*The requested return date for the survey was listed as June 30, 2000. Due to the number of requests*

received asking that late returns be included in the final tabulation of results and the volume of returns coming in after the June 30 date, the closing date was extended to August 1, 2000.

From the initial design of the survey instrument and distribution methodology to the tabulation of response data, emphasis has been placed on gaining as much qualitative (narrative) information as possible. With a total of 22 subject oriented questions and 7 demographic inquiries, a certain number of questions would appear to be of minimal relevance to a community such as North Andover, but from a law enforcement perspective they are important in order to draw comparisons with other jurisdictions.

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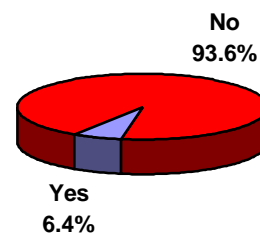
**While statistical validity and research design are important concepts which were adhered to in the process of conducting the survey, this project was not meant to be an academic exercise. Rather, the attempt in both the 1999 and 2000 surveys was to provide practical, useful information, which the department can use to gauge past performance, as well as identify issues and areas of concern that will help in enhancing the department's future operations and policing strategies.**

Community view on crime and safety

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*Overall the survey results indicate that residents feel safe and secure in their community. When asked if they have limited or changed any of their activities in the*

In general have you limited or changed your activities in the last twelve (12) months due to your fear of crime?



last twelve months due to a fear of crime, 94% answered in the negative. This compares with 79% who answered *No* to this question in 1999. Further, in responding to questions dealing with how often they engage in activities such as

walking, jogging, or riding a bicycle, 83% indicated that they do so *Often* or *Very often* during the day and 53% responded in the affirmative (*Often* or *Very often*) during the evening

While these results, in addition to the extensive commentary provided by respondents, are indicative of a citizenry which has a relatively low fear of crime, the survey also indicates that residents are concerned about a number of issues.

In response to the question *"Keeping in mind that the police budget is limited, which three (3) of the following police activities do you feel are most important?"* the most frequent responses included *Neighborhood/Cruiser patrols* (56%), *Drug enforcement* (36%), *Youth/School services* (36%), *Traffic Enforcement* (27%), and *Crime prevention programs* (27%).

In addition, of the nearly 1,100 narrative responses provided, 497 or almost one half (45%) dealt with motor vehicle, traffic safety, police presence, and/or community involvement issues.

Examples of this commentary include the following:

- ◆ *"The police do a great job with what they have. They need more police so they can be more proactive in fighting crime and helping the community. The town is growing but the police are at late 1970's staffing levels. Someone is going to get hurt. Then what will we do?"*
- ◆ *"Get out on the road and control traffic, parking on streets and crosswalks, blocking traffic, and parking across from fire station on Main Street."*
- ◆ *"I have observed an increase in the number of running red light violations along Rt. 125. I believe an increase of*

*police visibility along this road is necessary."*

- ◆ *"North Andover has grown way too fast. The police department has not. How could they possibly keep up with police work when the force has not been increased accordingly?"*
- ◆ *"Need more officers to provide more services, population and school systems are growing, need more officers to accommodate the schools, traffic, etc."*
- ◆ *"Be more visible during commuting hours. This would slow traffic somewhat and hopefully reduce the number of accidents on Rt. 114 and 125 in particular."*
- ◆ *"Get more information out about what the North Andover Police Department is doing, especially community service. I am sure the officers work hard but are spread thin and could use more staff to provide other services."*
- ◆ *"The local police department does not communicate directly with local citizens. If you don't subscribe to a daily newspaper, you really don't know about problems where to watch, etc. Or what to do on a day-by-day basis. I feel a newsletter once a year to start would be a good way for the community to feel connected with our police department, detailing their goals, where to expect to see them, i.e. special projects."*

### **Community view of police department**

It is clear from the survey results that the overall evaluation of the department is very positive with an overwhelming number (95%) of the respondents rating its performance as *Above average* or *Excellent*.

The residents of the town feel that they have a responsive, professional police force. With 28% of the respondents indicating that they have made a call for service to the police department in the last twelve (12) months, the vast majority of those individuals (71%) indicated that they were *Very satisfied* with

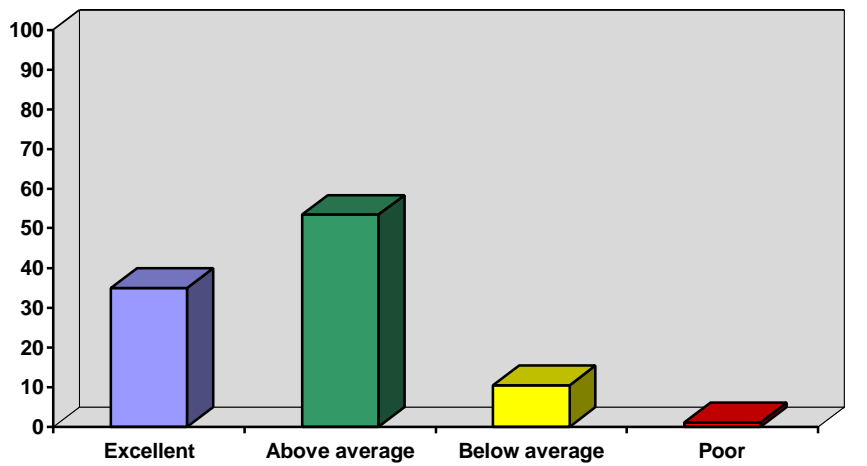
how the police handled the problem.

Further, when asked to rate officers on their professionalism, majority (60%) of respondents answered *Above average* or *Excellent*.

Once again, the extensive narrative provided by the citizen respondents support these findings.

Examples of this commentary include the following:

- ◆ *"We are very happy with the North Andover Police Department and would like to see it continue."*
- ◆ *"I think you guys are doing a fine job."*
- ◆ *"Thank you for your service and trying to improve it."*
- ◆ *"Excellent work but there is room for improvement."*
- ◆ *"Nice town, great police department."*
- ◆ *"Thank you for this opportunity. This questionnaire shows that our police department is taking the time and money to be sure residents are taken care of and their concerns are being heard."*
- ◆ *"Thanks for the opportunity to respond and voice our opinion. Overall the North Andover Police do a fine job. Thanks."*
- ◆ *"In general, I think the North Andover Police Department is doing a great job."*
- ◆ *"I am very satisfied with the police department and its leadership."*
- ◆ *"I think they are doing a decent job and continue to do so."*
- ◆ *"I am very pleased to live in North Andover for ten years. During that time, police response has been excellent for any problem we have had."*



The findings presented here are reasons for the citizens

- ♦ *“Excellent response time to E911 calls. Superior professional conduct. Friendly and well informed officers.”*
- ♦ *“Keep up the great job. North Andover is a terrific place to live thanks to all your hard work. We appreciate you. Keep up the excellent work. Thank you.”*
- ♦ *“I have been very happy with the services provided by the North Andover Police Department in my twenty-four years as a resident. They have been professional and courteous to myself and my family (teenagers) throughout the years.*

## Conclusions

*With regard to individual areas of concern, as expected, traffic related problems are a major issue for the community and will continue to require significant attention from the department. The survey results indicate that the majority of citizens feel safe in their homes and community, but people would still like to see an increase in police officer visibility. This correlates with the opinion of a significant proportion of the respondents that the department needs to focus more attention on*

*providing information to and interaction with the public.*

of the Town of North Andover to remain positive about their police department and the public safety services it provides. But when these findings are taken in addition to the results of the 1999 Citizen Survey, the community must pay careful attention to the increase in the volume of work being placed on the staff of the department in order to maintain the quality of service the public has come to expect of it.

In addition, research conducted in July 2000 on officer/citizen ratio comparisons and information released by the United States Census Bureau which estimated a 20% increase in the population of North Andover from 1990 to 1999, making it the **“fastest rate of growth among larger Merrimack Valley towns”** according to published reports, indicates that if the number of staff does not increase in some proportion to the growth of the population, serious issues affecting the safety and security of the citizens and visitors to the Town of North Andover are certain to develop.

this report for internal, educational, commercial, or personal use by persons other than the Town of North Andover, Massachusetts, its officers, employees, and authorized agents may be obtained from Crest Associates, P.O. Box 6060, Boston, Massachusetts 02114.

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